

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Hurricane Katrina Talking Points
11 September 2005**

Daily Key Messages and General Mission Talking Points

DAILY MESSAGES – Sunday, 11 September 2005

1. The Overall Corps Mission

We are continuing to work primarily in support of the Federal Emergency Management Agency; the Corps of Engineers is carrying out a wide variety of missions in response to Hurricane Katrina. In addition to our efforts to get the water out of New Orleans we are also providing services throughout the affected areas to include provision of ice, water and temporary power; as well as debris removal and temporary roofing.

Our three priorities are:

First, supporting efforts to save lives and find people,

Second, sustaining lives (water and shelter) and

Third, setting conditions for recovery (cleanup, restoring infrastructure and navigation).

Corps employees are empowered to make decisions regarding hurricane relief support on the spot as long as the decision is lawful, ethical and the employee is willing to be accountable for the action. This has helped keep things moving in a time of difficult communication and confusion.

Currently we have approximately **1,666 Corps** employees deployed in the affected areas and our missions are totaling **\$2.9 billion**.

Other Mission Statistics:

- **44.5 million liters of bottled water delivered**
- **174 million pounds of ice delivered**
- **22 generators delivered**
- **127 roofs installed**
- **273,635 cy of debris removed**

2. Un-Watering Progress in New Orleans

Working with the city of New Orleans and private contractors, the Army Corps of Engineers continues to make steady progress on pumping out floodwaters from the city of New Orleans and immediate vicinity.

Through a system of existing and temporary pumps floodwaters are being pumped into Lake Ponchartrain. The number of pumps that are operational at any given time is continually changing. As an average, this system is

pumping water at about one million gallons per day, which equals approximately 432 Olympic-size swimming pools per day.

Original estimates for completing the un-watering of the city have recently been revised. Several factors, such as no significant rainfall, strong easterly winds that have allowed the Lake Ponchartrain levels to recede lower than expected, the deliberate un-watering breaches or 'notches' have allowed flooded areas to drain faster and thus have improved the ability to acquire more pump capacity. As of today, we estimate the overall un-watering effort will be completed in early to mid-October. A breakdown by parish is provided:

New Orleans Parish, the week of October 2

New Orleans East Parish, the week of October 8

Chalmette Parish, the week of October 8

Plaquemines East Parish, the week of October 18, and

Plaquemines West, the week of October 18.

The estimates are based on normal seasonal rainfall.

It is important to note that the un-watering effort will remove most, but not all the water. There will be some isolated pockets of water that will remain. However, these pockets of water should not hamper recovery efforts such as debris removal, structural assessments and restoration of critical services.

3. Finding Human Remains during Work

The US Army Corps of Engineers is sympathetic to the tragic loss of life that occurred in New Orleans and throughout other parts of Louisiana and Mississippi as a result of Hurricane Katrina. As Corps personnel continue recovery operations throughout the affected areas, they may come discover human remains. If this is the case, Corps personnel will handle the remains in a dignified and respectful manner and will contact the appropriate authorities.

4. Water Quality Issues Related to Pumping Water into Lake Ponchartrain

Everyone is concerned about the quality of water being moved from New Orleans to Lake Ponchartrain, but our first priority is the health and safety of residents of New Orleans and all responders as we get the water out of the city. We are working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to ensure human health and safety as we drain the water and have received approval from EPA to move the water following the agency's normal practices in emergencies. EPA is monitoring and testing the water. As we drain the water, we anticipate there will be times when we may need to take additional measures, and we are working with EPA on this right now. Any questions as to water quality should be referred to the Office of Water, U.S. EPA.

5. Corps Team in New Orleans

During and after disasters, the Corps of Engineers victim district team concept is often put into place. Colonel Richard Wagenaar, commander and district engineer of the New Orleans District, has shifted his attention to reconstituting the district, and Colonel Duane Gapinski of the Rock Island District has taken the lead on un-watering the city of New Orleans. The district has now accounted for nearly every one of its 1193 employees. Many employees are available and waiting to return to work and 75-100 are actually working at the emergency operations centers. The plan has three phases: (1) immediately place essential staff at existing offices in Vicksburg, Lafayette and St. Louis or by telework; (2) place other employees when space and IM/IT is available in Vicksburg, Jackson, Clinton, MS, Lafayette, Baton Rouge and other sites or by telework; and (3) transition to the New Orleans office when the facility is available.

General Mission Talking Points

Discovering the Breach

We received an unconfirmed report Monday morning, 29 August 2005, from local firemen that there was breach at the 17th Street Canal. Due to its potential significance the District Commander Col Richard Wagenaar, who had weathered the storm in New Orleans, attempted to view the site on Monday afternoon. He was unable to get to the area due to high water, power lines and debris. In their attempts to get to the site they encountered significant flooding at the I-10/610 split. Based on water height at that location it was obvious that significant flooding had occurred. They were able to validate the levee breach on Tuesday, and they began implementing a plan to fix the breach

Receiving FOIA Requests

The Corps has received a number of Freedom of Information Act requests from news media over the past several days. The requests have been for inspection reports, evacuation plans, contracts, email and correspondence. We understand the public's need for information about the Corps of Engineers capabilities, projects and performance in responding to national emergencies. Due to the hurricane and flooding in New Orleans, we are unable to access our files in the New Orleans District Office. In the interim we will process these requests for the records that are here in the DC headquarters.

Hurricane Preparedness

We are continually monitoring the weather and are prepared to respond, if needed, should another hurricane approach the United States. Although we have more than 1,000 people deployed in support of Hurricane Katrina, we are reconstituting our response capability and have many more employees prepared for any other major storms or other natural disasters. We continue to support our

military missions in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as supporting the civil works mission at home.

Navigation

Above New Orleans, navigation is unrestricted. Below New Orleans, the Mississippi River is open to shallow draft traffic and to deep draft vessels to 39 - foot draft - daylight only - until aids to navigation (AToN) has been fully re-established. **Surveys have found no obstructions.** Navy and Corps vessels are surveying the **full reach (Southwest Pass to Baton Rouge)** of the deep draft channel. The surveys are estimated to be completed by 13 September. **USCG has several resources working the AToN's. While full replacement will take several weeks, the most critical will be repaired in a few days. MVN has awarded contract for hopper dredge Stuyvesant to dredge Southwest Pass.**

The Gulf Intracoastal Waterway is open from Texas to Florida using Baptiste Collette, as an alternative to the IHNC. The GIWW reach from Baptiste Collette to Pascagoula is limited to 9.5' draft, versus the 12' authorized. Caution is recommended for transit.

Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC) Lock is operational but not operating due to bridge closures and sunken barges. The contracting firm of Boh Brothers is continuing to remove sunken vessels. Anticipate removal by mid-week.

Mississippi River Gulf Outlet is closed to deep draft vessels. Inland portion will serve as an alternative route to GIWW due to closure of IHNC for shallow draft vessels. Preliminary surveys indicate controlling depth of 27'.

Port Fourchon sustained significant damage, but is operating to a limited extent. Sunken vessels are not blocking the channel.

Corps preliminary surveys are underway for Atchafalaya, Houma, and other channels. NOAA is continuing its surveys of the Mississippi River to verify Corps centerline survey results.

Tiger Pass is shoaled to less than 6'. This channel, authorized to 14' provides a shorter route for vessels traveling to the west from the Mississippi River near the mouth. Primarily used by fishing and supply vessels. MVN preparing contract to dredge.

GWOT effect on Mission Capability

The Corps' 35,000 employees have a long history of volunteerism and dedication to assisting our nation in times of need, both at home and abroad. Our overall capability to respond to this and other disasters at home is not diminished by our support to the Global War on Terror.

Rebuilding New Orleans

At this time, the Corps is focused on its missions of disaster relief, recovery and unwatering New Orleans and surrounding areas. Local and state officials will lead the future discussions for rebuilding New Orleans.

Future Funding

Recently, Congress approved a large funding package for hurricane relief with \$400 million for Corps missions. The President and Congress are currently considering additional funding to assist in the relief and recovery efforts following Hurricane Katrina.

At the request of the Administration, the Corps of Engineers is providing input regarding the restoration of flood damage reduction infrastructure as well as the inland and deep draft navigation system.

Other Missions

In support of FEMA, the Corps of Engineers will be assessing and repairing public facilities (schools, libraries, fire stations, etc.) for the state of Louisiana. This mission is estimated at \$200 million dollars.

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